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THE GLOBAL CLIMATE COALITION

Position Statement in Support of Scientific and Economic Research

The Global Climate Coalition places a high priority on scientific and economic research to advance the understanding of earth systems, introduce new knowledge into climate models, and refine the tools necessary for decision-making with respect to long-term economic strategies necessary to address potential climate change.

The understanding of global climate change has evolved significantly over the past decade. Over just the last five years, as evidenced by a comparison of the findings of the intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's First and Second Assessment Reports, the net effect of greater knowledge has been to lower climate change projections of a "business-as-usual" scenario - about a one-third smaller temperature change and about a one-fourth smaller sea level change is now highlighted in the IPCC report.

Despite extensive research, the range of uncertainty in key aspects of climate change assessment remains high. A careful reading of the IPCC's Second Assessment Report indicates many significant uncertainties remain in the basic science, climate modeling, and economic assessments of climate change. As noted in the IPCC Working Group I report (Section 8.7), "no study to date has positively attributed all or part of the [historic temperature] change to anthropogenic causes. Nor has any study quantified the magnitude of a greenhouse gas effect or aerosol effect in the observed data--an issue that is of primary relevance to policymakers."

With existing uncertainties in science and potential impacts, society may attempt to protect itself at an unnecessary high cost against what may be low probability or theoretically possible future impacts. Resolving uncertainty about the true nature of climate change risk allows for more efficient timing of any necessary mitigation and adaptation policies, and avoids unfounded and expensive reactions that may ultimately prove unnecessary. As Working Group II of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded in its Summary for Policymakers, "The value of better information about the processes, impacts of and responses to climate change is likely to be great."

In short, consistently improved and updated information about basic science, modeling, and potential climate change policies is vital. Critical issues include, but are not limited to: how the earth's climate systems work, including the role of the oceans, water vapor and clouds; how new and better knowledge about earth's systems can be incorporated into climate models; how changes in climate may impact society and ecosystems, particularly at the regional level; how social, technological and environmental change, as well as adaptation, can be integrated into appropriate baseline scenarios; and how the potential benefits and costs of government policies over an extended time-frame can be adequately assessed. Private sector and government support for global climate scientific and economic research is necessary to address this complex and evolving issue.

The Global Climate Coalition is an organization of business trade associations and private companies established in 1989 to coordinate business participation in the scientific and policy debate on the global climate change issue.

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